

Scientific and Technical Employee Development (STED) Meeting January 23-25, 2008

Committee members:

Name	Role/Affiliation
Steve Blanchard	WRD Senior Staff
Virginia de Lima	Center Directors
Dorrie Gellenbeck (maternity leave)	NWIS
Bob Hainly (Chair)	Data Chiefs
Bill Hazell (via teleconference)	Hydrologic Technicians
Leo House (not present)	NRP
Harry Jenter (alternate)	NRP
Mike Nolan	OSW
Dave Pollock	OGW
Kurt Schultz	IT Specialists
Lynn Taylor (alternate)	NWIS
<i>Vacant</i>	Studies Section Chiefs
Alan Ward	OED
Franceska Wilde	OWQ

Meeting Introduction:

- Bob Hainly opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. Three additions were suggested and incorporated.
- Harry Jenter is substituting for Leo House as the NRP representative at this meeting.
- As a result of John Trommer's January 2008 retirement, a replacement will be needed. As the committee lacks a bonafide representative from the western region, a studies chief from there was suggested.
 - **ACTION ITEM** – Steve will contact the WRD Program Officers to solicit replacement names for John's Studies Section Chief position.

Review of the Minutes from the October 2007 meeting and the Action Items Log:

- These actions were postponed to a later date.

Tuition Policy Recommendation & Presentation to Senior Staff

- Following a description of the draft Senior Staff presentations by Bob, Franceska, and Virginia, the group decided upon a standardized presentation format and an order of delivery.
- The group reviewed the purpose and expected outcomes of the meeting with Senior Staff.
- The meeting was adjourned and reconvened at the Senior Staff meeting.
- Presentations were made by Bob concerning 2007 STED goals and activities and by Virginia describing the TEL program status and the committee's recommendation.
- Franceska provided a demonstration of Module 3 of the Water-Quality principles course.
- FY2008 STED funding request: Total = \$92K; \$22K for Breeze software maintenance, \$70K for TEL Program support (\$16K to complete WQ Principles TEL course, \$54K for OED TEL instructional designer contract)

Senior Staff meeting feedback and discussion

- **DECISION** – Senior Staff agreed to provide the \$92K requested to support the TEL program in FY2008, if it was available.
- **ACTION ITEM** – Steve will itemize the funding request and communicate it to Gene Summerhill.
- **DECISION** – Senior Staff agreed to adopt the recommendation of STED to charge tuition fees for TEL courses that involved instructor interaction. No tuition fee will be charged for static, non-interactive courses.
- **DECISION** – Senior Staff decided that non-fee TEL courses will be provided to the public, if requested, at no charge.
- No follow-up needed; may need to respond to further questions
- Senior Staff questions/comments during presentation
 - Is STED asking for a long-term funding commitment?
 - Will tuition be charged for “required” courses?
 - A \$100 tuition fee is not a problem.
 - OWQ needs funding to support development of courses — no discretionary \$\$ available
 - The investment of tuition is a good incentive for course completion.
 - OGW is skeptical about online learning. The tuition fee is OK, but GW science is too fluid to develop long-standing courses. Would be willing to participate if a suitable topic is found.
 - Prefer keeping some blended and interactive courses to promote networking.
 - TEL course development is a steep investment for SMEs.
 - Should we charge tuition or other fee for outside students? SS decision – no.
 - We should charge for instructor-led courses—not for “canned” courses.
- Are they aware of what we really are asking for in \$\$? Itemized request from Steve should clear up any confusion.
- Tuition fee to be charged for interactive (enhanced classroom) and instructor-led courses.
 - We will wait to see what amount of funding the TEL tuition fees generate before considering and requesting a diversion of existing funding from regular tuition to support the TEL Program
 - Classification of courses for tuition policy requires division of courses into two categories: self-contained (no interaction needed) and assisted (blended and classroom)
 - **DECISION** – Tuition fee funds will be used for development of future courses
- Self-contained courses will be available to the public at no charge and advertised through public DOI Learn web page
- Discussion of electronic vs. face-to-face training
 - Majority of group encourages face-to-face training
 - **DECISION** – Assisted learning classes are preferred over self-contained, when possible
 - Encourage “assisted” learning, but make one-way self-contained training available
 - Preferences for assisted-learning methods: 1. electronic, 2. conference call, 3. video conference, 4. classroom

DOI LEARN course advertisement

- Population to receive announcement is directed by coordinator
- Coordinator can advertise on public or DOI-restricted catalog - can restrict to any level
- Coordinator is certified by class-coordinator training
 - duration is about 3 hours
 - offered by Melanie Hood
- Right now, NTC cannot take payments from private citizens (competition with the private sector)

SW Hydrologic Technician Training (HT) Program

- OSW is developing a "Comprehensive SW Data Training Program"
- Multiple groups working on plan – Central Region (initiator) & OSW (coordinator)
- CR recognizes large number HTs eligible to retire – about 300 in next 5 years
 - Initially wanted a 2-week required course within 1st year to be taken at HIF
- OSW suggests a broad suite of training classes for new and current employees
 - Would like to use multiple venues - TEL, classroom, etc.
 - Struggling with "mandated" sense of HT training program
- Working towards late summer, early fall 2008 adoption and implementation
- STED discussed needs for HT SW training, mandatory issue, and intense vs. distributed training format
 - **DECISION – STED endorses the SW HT training program as proposed with the following suggestions.**
- STED Recommendations to OSW and HT training program developers:
 - Add introductory course on SW Field and Office Procedures or Policy – not a technical methods course but could include some principles to support policies/procedures
 - Also need basic field work and electronics training
 - If program designated mandatory, use blended learning as much as possible
- Course content objectives
 - Include history of methods and where to go for more information
 - Provide basic procedures and policy resources to back them up
 - Establish training calendar at least one year in advance and maintain year-to-year
 - Offer course 2 times per year
 - Will include a 2-week field methods and electronics course
- Want to develop procedures course quickly and let it evolve
 - start out with simple (easy) course - go to instructional design later?
- STED discussion comments
 - Suggest that 1 week at HIF (electronics) and 1-week Regional field methods classes are split out into two separate courses
 - Incorporate training levels with calendar
 - Mandatory "hammer" could be a standard check of compliance during OSW reviews
 - Do OGW and OWQ have any similar ideas?

Accommodating Different Levels of TEL Courses

- Discussion initiated to resolve some questions and issues about TEL program course development requirements
- Who has the authority to make decisions about the course presentation requirements?
 - OED looks to STED for these decisions
- On-line learning is not the final answer
 - Multiple presentation methods is the most effective way of reaching students
 - Select the method based on desired outcome
 - Upgrading a course beyond what's minimally necessary is not prohibited
- For a full-blended TEL, a 10-question assessment is recommended

OED's expectations of STED - STED's responsibilities with/for TEL

- Review and testing – provide feedback!
- Not to decide whether a class should be developed
- Serve to establish priorities for designers?
- Chart and oversee TEL course development progress
 - Status of course development within OED, Discipline Offices, NWIS, IT, and NRP
- Technical training advisor to OED and WRD
 - **DECISION – STED to act as WRD advisor and TEL promoter/enabler**
- Look for new training opportunities – e. g.
 - Develop Learning Modules containing recorded WebEx presentations, libraries, Excel functions
 - Develop "one-stop shop" for technical training and searchable repository

HRI Proposal and Award

- A means to advertise the TEL Program
- OED will solicit proposals to develop TEL courses - \$50K each - 2-yr funding
 - **DECISION** – STED chair will serve on proposal review team

Mentoring Program for SW Techs

- OED wants to establish special process for this employee group - new pool available
- Success of program may be based on ability to use mentors other than volunteers

List-serve at National Training Center

- STED requested by OED to advertise List-serve availability by requesting memo from Bob Hirsch
- Also use memo to provide awareness of TEL and TEL role in WRD training
 - **ACTION ITEM** – Alan will draft memo for STED chair.
 - **ACTION ITEM** – Bob will provide any edits and forward to Steve B.
 - **ACTION ITEM** – Steve will forward to Bob Hirsch with request for distribution.

National Training Center Use Statistics

- Participation is down - especially in 2007 – reasons?
 - Late passage of budget?
 - Partly result of off-years for every 3 or 4-year conferences
- Looking for answers to reduced usage
 - **ACTION ITEM** – Bob to look at training summaries in WSC Annual Program Review materials for any trends
- OED requesting ideas for any new business models to improve NTC usage & course attendance

Communications

- STED web page
 - Internal-only access
 - **DECISION** – STED will pursue enhancements of web page as a means of better communication
 - Use as a repository for WRD technical training information
 - Add links to other WRD training resources
 - Add a file repository
 - How to manage dated/changing materials?
 - **ACTION ITEM** – Bob to establish team to manage and start populating repository – team member suggestions: Mike, TJ, and Kurt
 - Add web-hit counters
 - Start adding links and then request suggestions for additions
 - Add Lotus Notes mail address for questions / needs
 - **ACTION ITEM** – Mike to add e-mail link to STED web page
- Enhancements to external (to WRD) communication
 - **DECISION** – STED will increase communication within WRD to promote training opportunities and activities
 - Add STED notice to bottom of WRD list serve announcements
 - Add STED info to CORE
 - Add TEL description to List serve memo from Hirsch
 - **ACTION ITEM** – Bob to add TEL and STED information to List-serve memo
 - Request STED presentation addition to CHIDER agenda in June - team of Bob, Bill, and Mike
 - Other committee members transmit information to peers at other National meetings
 - Develop all-WRD memo announcing training resources (after Web page updates initiated)
- Internal committee communication
 - Distribution of agendas, minutes, action item logs, and other committee materials
 - No preferred method – choice deferred to comfort of person distributing information

Review and Establishment of FY2008 STED Committee Goals

- Current long-term (LT) goal is Graduate Program - will probably not be funded
 - Alternative: develop "certified" graduate courses within WRD?
 - Alternative: look at technical needs of WSC hydrologists
- Suggestions for short-term (ST) and long-term goals
 - LT - investigate opportunities for advanced scientific education to meet the mission of the USGS and personal career goals
 - ST - develop, populate, maintain STED web page
 - ST - maintaining and developing TEL program
 - ST – develop and essential and recommended training plan for all SW hydrographers
 - LT - develop an essential and recommended training plan for all hydrographers
 - **ACTION ITEM – Bob to develop ST and LT STED goals list and route for comment**

Wrap-up

- Draft minutes of this meeting will be distributed for committee review.
- Bob will continue to update action item log and email to STED.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 27 at 1:00 pm EDT.